



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Public Health and Public Safety Committee

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, February 29, 2024

6:00 PM

This meeting was held in the Committee Room and virtually via Zoom, was called to order at 6:02 pm by Chair McLaughlin, and adjourned at 7:37 pm with a roll call vote of all in favor (Councilor Sait, Councilor Davis and Chair McLaughlin), none opposed, and none against.

Others present: Kimberly Hutter – Mayor’s Office, Kelley Hiland – HHS , Nancy Bacci – HHS, Mike Libby – Somerville Homeless Coalition (SHC), Hannah O’Halloran – SHC, Patti Contente – COHR, Stephanie Widzowski – Clerk of Committees.

Roll Call

Present: Ward One City Councilor Matthew McLaughlin, Ward Six City Councilor Lance L. Davis and Ward Five City Councilor Naima Sait

- Committee Minutes (ID # [23-1824](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the Public Health and Public Safety Committee Meeting of December 11, 2023.

RESULT: ACCEPTED
AYE: Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Six City Councilor Davis and Ward Five City Councilor Sait

- Order (ID # [24-0062](#))
 By Councilor McLaughlin, Councilor Strezo, Councilor Wilson and Councilor Davis
 That the Director of Health and Human Services provide monthly updates to this Council’s Committee on Public Health and Public Safety regarding ongoing efforts to address homelessness.

Kelley Hiland shared a presentation about different levels of prevention and crisis intervention. Liaison Hutter shared a video that Dir. Carroll prepared in response to this item. Hannah O’Halloran talked about specific efforts the Somerville Homeless Coalition has been doing to help unhoused residents, about their shelters and street outreach team, and the logistics of housing navigation. Dir. Contente gave background on COHR and its partnership with SHC from 2020-2022, and she noted that COHR has been focused on walk-ins since HHS filled out its staff.

Councilor Sait sparked a larger discussion about how information is collected and what data can be retrieved and shared, especially with regards to youth and seniors. There was also a conversation of how many people are using shelters or warming centers, specifically in East Somerville, and reasons that someone may refuse shelter. Dir. Mike Libby of SHC estimated that there are about 30 unhoused residents in Somerville, about 45 including those using shelters. Liaison

Hutter said that she would see what information could be shared from weekly meetings with interdepartmental staff. Chair McLaughlin requested monthly updates on weekly city staff meetings on this issue.

Chair McLaughlin stressed that MassDOT will begin work soon under I-93, an area some use for shelter, and led a discussion on how to prevent displacement. The committee also discussed the attached SPD report on calls for service in East Somerville (“PHPS - 2024-02-29 PD Calls for Service (with 24-0062)”).

Chair McLaughlin sponsored members of the public. Mike Connolly spoke to the nuance and prevalence of family homelessness, and about the housing bond bill currently before the State Legislature. Melissa McWhinney asked about the processes for creating Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) or affordable housing and how the opiate settlement fund will be allocated. Mary Byrne suggested investigating whether the vacant houses on Allen St acquired by the city could be used for PSH services, and Janet Grogan called for earlier city planning with debriefs. Alex Peary mentioned quarterly meetings organized by COHR and emphasized the importance of a citywide approach to address homelessness. Mary Cassesso highlighted a collective approach adopted by Chelsea, and Laurie Goldman called for increased capacity to scale up what each organization is already doing.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

Referenced Documents:

- PHPS - 2024-02-29 PD Calls for Service (with 24-0062)
- PHPS - 2024-02-29 HHS Slides for PHPS (with 24-0062)